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ABSTRACT

The family has been identified as one of the primary potential support systems, with marriage as the key relationship within the family system. Multi-generational research has pointed out the central importance of the middle generation in maintaining the complex family system functioning. This study was designed to enhance understanding of middle-aged women and men who have managed to sustain marriages over a long portion of adulthood. Subjects included 131 wives and 107 of their husbands, married an average of 32 years with an average of 4.4 children from an almost entirely white suburban community. Data were gathered through personal interviews and questionnaires on personality, psychosomatic symptoms, alcohol and drug use, and age norm expectations. The analyses examined: (1) patterns of self-rated marital satisfaction for women and men and their correlates; (2) five patterns of Marital Politics were identified for women and nine for men, patterns which were rooted firmly in the gender-specific experiences of the respondents; (3) correlates of styles of Marital Politics; and (4) congruence in Marital Politics styles for couples. These analyses indicated wives showed somewhat lower satisfaction than husbands; social status measures were minimally related to styles of Marital Politics; and there was some congruence but also substantial variability in the ways partners responded to each other. (ABL)

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THIRTYSOMETHING YEARS OF MARRIAGE:

UNDERSTANDING EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN AND MEN

IN ENDURING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Prepared for discussion

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THIRTYSOMETHING YEARS OF MARRIAGE

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THIRTYSOMETHING YEARS OF MARRIAGE:

UNDERSTANDING EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN AND MEN

IN ENDURING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

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I. OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

The research reported here is designed to enhance our understanding of middle-aged women and men who have managed to sustain marriages over a long portion of adulthood. The sample includes 131 wives and 107 of their husbands, married an average of 32 years, with an average of 4.4 children; they are Midwest caucasian Americans living in and around "Parkville." The families examined here have defied the permission (and even encouragements) over the past few decades to divorce; they have continued the intense family focus with which most of them entered marriage. They are now anticipating old age, and they bring their patterns of family centeredness into later life. They are among the parents of the "baby boomers". As the recent decade review of research on families in later life pointed out, "the 1990s represent the decade in which the baby boomers and their parents become members of their own later life families" (Brubaker, 1990). Understanding how they organize their family life may help us anticipate how this younger generation may deal with their own aging. They represent one variety of "survivors" amidst the changing patterns of family life.

A. Midlife Marriage: Key Support System

The family has been identified as one of the primary potential support systems, with marriage as the key relationship within the family system (Hagestad, 1981; Medley, 1981; Mouser, Powers, Keith, & Goudy, 1985). Multi-generational research has pointed out the central importance of the middle generation in

maintaining the complex family system functioning. Individuals in the middle-aged generation are a source of support for both younger and older family members (Brody, 1990; Hagestad & Neugarten, 1985). A well-functioning middle generation can thus have ripple effects on other generations. Dysfunctioning middle generation members may affect other generations negatively.

Troubled marriages have been identified as an important source of strain (Pearlin, 1979), leading to health problems for one or both partners (Hayne, Feinleib, Levine, Scotch, & Kannel, 1978; Kandel, Davies, & Raveis, 1985; Mulligan, 1980). Recent epidemiological evidence suggests that marriage helps middle aged and older men survive, though it is not yet clear how this might operate. The research reported here begins to clarify the nature of that protection for some men--and the ways in which marriage relationships can also contribute to increased distress.

Marital quality has been one of the most-investigated variables in family research. Three themes are evident (Brubaker, 1990; Gilford, 1986; Lewis & Spanier, 1979). Some researchers have reported fairly consistent declines after the honeymoon period, with "disenchantment" by middle age and progressive further declines into old age. Many surveys have revealed a curvilinear pattern, with the lowest marital satisfaction reported by middle-aged men and women. In addition, some but not all studies report greater marital satisfaction for husbands than for wives, though wives may be more variable (Skolnick, Leino, & Blum, 1987).

Many factors affect the quality of marriage at a given time. Gilford & Bengtson (1979) suggested that "personal developmental influences as well as sociohistorical forces related to age and generational membership" were important to marital quality. They said that "The major task of subsequent research is to identify differential sequential positions of the marital career" (p 396). This research is a response to that challenge.

B. Midlife Changes and Challenges: Gender-Linked Personal Styles

The issues are very complex during the middle years, when varied changes may occur in individual and system functioning (Kalish, 1990). On the individual level, midlife persons are confronted with increased biological vulnerabilities and gradual reductions in reserve energies. Many career paths are structured so that men, especially, reach their highest level during the middle years; they may be challenged by a demanding position, disappointed because they have not achieved their "dream" (Levinson, 1978); and/or

anticipate retirement. Women who have been substantially involved in childcare typically welcome the opportunities for redirecting their energies, often to enterprises outside the home; many seek employment for economic reasons. Many women and some men are challenged in midlife by concerns for their own parents.

One particularly interesting personality shift during midlife has been noted. David Gutmann, over the course of three decades of research in varied cultural settings, has documented a shift in what he terms ego mastery styles, the general, basic ways individuals relate to themselves and their world (Gutmann, 1987). It is assessed in terms of the rationale underlying the behavior, not the particular manifested behavior itself. Gutmann sees ego mastery style as shifting in predictable ways for men and women over the life course. He has identified three major mastery styles, which he calls active, passive-accommodative, and magical mastery. Persons with an *active* mastery style strive for autonomy, competence and control, and mistrust any dependent wishes that might lend one to trade complicance for security. The person acting in an active mastery mode tries to change outer reality in accordance with his or her wishes. Aggressive motives are openly expressed, and aggressive energy is used to change external circumstances. Persons with a *passive-accommodative* mastery style see others as having control over valued resources; thus, the route to security involves accommodating to the wishes of the powerful other person. The emphasis becomes changing oneself. Overt gentleness, avoidance of strife, and humility are characteristic; aggressive impulses are constrained. Most middle-aged persons can be characterized in terms of one of these dominant styles, or as *Bi-modal*, showing aspects of both styles. A few middle-aged persons (and more very old ones) show evidence of *Magical* mastery, where one deals with trouble by distorting reality.

The active mastery mode sounds quite like the stereotypic descriptions of masculinity, and, indeed this style is one that seems characteristic of younger men. However, Gutmann has documented a shift, in the mid-50s, from active mastery to bi-modal or passive mastery among men. His work, and other anthropological accounts (summarized in Gutmann, 1987), suggests that women become more openly assertive in later life, and are less compliant and less willing to trade compliance for security. One of the guiding assumptions of this research is that insofar as these shifts seem to occur, naturally, during the middle years, they would be revealed in --and have substantial impact on -- midlife marriages.

C. Changes in Gender Styles: Models of Midlife Change

One of the ongoing controversies concerns the sources of gender-linked behavior patterns, even in later life (Huyck, 1989a, 1990). Many of the current models focus on the ways that social experiences shape gender-linked ways of perceiving and behaving. A **cohort** model emphasizes the ways in which social realities and norms, and related socialization practices, influence children and adolescents at crucial formative periods to mold their sense of the best and appropriate ways for males and females to behave and feel. In such a perspective, differences in gender-linked behaviors can be related to broad-scale social norms and social changes. A related but conceptually different model emphasizes **individual learning** experiences which have shaped gender-linked behaviors by midlife. Change, in this model, is more directed by idiosyncratic experiences, intentional and accidental, than by broad social movements. Both these perspectives emphasize the importance of experience and learning over inherent propensities to respond in particular ways; these learning-based models have been particularly influential in recent scholarship and social policy.

The past two decades have included substantial deliberate social change efforts directed at gender-linked behaviors. Most of those change efforts have been directed at helping women become more assertive, at work, in the community, and within the family, and more comfortable with what Gutmann would describe as active mastery. Men have been encouraged (or expected) to shift in ways which would make them more appreciative of assertive women, less threatened by female assertiveness, and more able to relate in the patterns which women experience as intimate. These social change efforts have been predicated on the assumption that gender differences are largely learned, and can be relearned intentionally and rationally. To the extent this is accurate, we would expect to see maximum gender stereotyping and differentiation among the oldest participants in this sample, since their core socialization and family experiences preceded the latest Women's Movement; we would expect to see less gender stereotyping and gendered behavior among the younger women and men, who were establishing their own families during the Movement.

The implicit, and often explicit assumption has been that such shifts might be initially stressful because of their unfamiliarity, but would contribute to greater personal and relational satisfaction and effectiveness once

they became established. This research provides some assessment of these hypotheses, by examining some of the correlates of wife assertiveness within the marriage.

An alternative model emphasizes the importance of socioevolutionary factors in the shaping of gender distinctions. This model assumes that characteristics which promote species or subgroup adaptation and survival are maintained genetically, making such characteristics slow to change and not much open to deliberate social change. For example, Gutmann has proposed (1975, 1987) that the gender-linked personality shifts observed during the middle years are tied to changes in parenting responsibilities; while current social values and practices may influence the ways in which emerging potentials are actualized, the patterns of change are tied to the family cycle rather than the social cycle. His model is based upon the traditional, enduring realities that species and cultural survival requires adequate parenting (and willingness to fight for one's tribe); human infants demand both physical and emotional security to develop their potentials, and they require such securities for a relatively long time. He has argued that the "parental imperatives" involved in providing emotional security for dependent children serve to reinforce the more accommodative, peacemaking capacities among mothers while encouraging repression of her more assertive (or assaltive) tendencies; good fathers, like the ones in this sample who take seriously their charge of providing physical security for their children, tend to repress their own dependency needs and focus on the active mastery aspects of their potential. However, as children demonstrate their ability to survive on their own, the parents can relax -- and reclaim those aspects of self repressed in the service of parenting. To the extent this is an accurate model, we will expect to find shifts in the marital relationship regarding renegotiation of power to be tied to shifts in family age, or responsibilities for children.

Thus, we are led to examine the impact of a particular change in the family, the "launching" of children into adulthood. While this was traditionally regarded (and measured) as an event, recent research makes it clear that it is more of a process, sometimes extending over many years with repeated "launchings" (Huyck, 1989b). Given the evidence that many families now have children who continue to reside in the parental home during the extended young adult period of education, trial careers (and often trial relationships or marriages), it is important to look more closely at the consequences of having children of different ages in the home.

D. Whose Marriage? His, Hers, or Theirs?

One of the first important decisions in studying marriage is to identify the level of analysis desired. As Bernard pointed out (1972), there are really three marriages to be assessed: his, hers, and theirs. Unfortunately, they are often confounded in research reports (Miller, Rollins, & Thomas, 1982). In this research we will use individual level reports, from husbands and wives, of their experiences in marriage. These will be analyzed as important data about these individuals. There is little consensus on how best to measure system functioning. This report includes some minimal assessments of congruence of experiences.

E. Qualitative Experiences of Midlife Marriage: Marital Politics

There have been relatively few efforts to characterize the qualitative experiences of women and men in marital relationships, beyond marital satisfaction. Skolnick, Leino, & Blum (1987), working with a sample quite comparable to the respondents from Parkville, used a Q-Sort technique to identify dimensions of marital experience among middle-aged respondents. She found that husbands and wives described somewhat different realities in the marriage and that different aspects of the marriage contributed to relative satisfaction with the relationship. The classic study of Cuber and Harroff (1965) used qualitative analyses to describe styles characterizing marital dyads; they demonstrated that couples evolve distinct patterns of marriages which were both stable and relatively satisfactory to the partners involved. In both cases, the focus was on examining varient patterns associated with similar levels of self-rated marital satisfaction or objective stability.

This research will contribute to this literature by comparing the experiences of wives and husbands in the ways they deal with potential and actual conflicts in needs, priorities, and "agendas" within the marriage. We have termed this dimension **Marital Politics** to try and capture the qualities of interdependency, negotiation, individual interest, and shared commitment to the family enterprise which characterize these relationships. While power has often been assessed in marital relationships, many of the conceptulizations seem too rooted in the external world of coercion and self-interest to be useful in understanding the nuances of relations among adults who have spent several decades forging a shared enterprise. Politics mostly involves negotiation, compromise, and searching for ways to reach common goals while preserving as much of individual interest as possible. Thus, this seems a reasonable metaphor for midlife marriages.

One of the major challenges in examining marital relationships is deciding how to gather valid data. Many studies utilize self-report survey data, which is subject to several constraints. Perhaps the most problematic is what is described as social desirability (Glenn, 1975), or the reluctance of individuals to report marital dissatisfaction unless they are intending to break the relationship. On the basis of experiences interviewing respondents for the research reported on here, I came to believe that the propensity to put a positive valence on reports was intended not only for the "other" (e.g., the researcher or listener) but also for the self; highly positive images of the marital relationship represent one kind of reality, but not the whole complexity. Self-report forced-choice instruments are not well suited to grasp the ambivalencies of this most complex relationship. Summary scales provide a single score which often masks differential contributions of several dimensions (Norton, 1983). In this research, we have utilized a mixture of self-report scales and expert ratings on personal semi-structured interviews.

F. Questions and Contributions

In this report, our understanding of durable marriages will focus on several issues. (1) First, what are the patterns of **self-reported marital satisfaction** for women and men? What factors correlate with varying satisfaction? (2) On the basis of careful qualitative analyses of interview protocols, what are the patterns of **marital politics** for wives and husbands? Marital politics reflects the perceptions conveyed about who prevails and with what rationale, particularly when there is potential conflict in the relationship. Arrangements described as marital politics are assumed to reflect one aspect of ego mastery style. (3) What are the correlates (predicates and consequences?) of varying Marital Politics arrangements? (4) How much congruence is there between wives and husbands in marital politics? Can we describe "their" marriages, or should we focus on varied responses of partners?

The research described here is responsive to several of the seven points identified as directions for future research on families in later life in the decade review by Brubaker (1990). We can use his numbering. (1) "Research on families in later life needs to be better grounded in theory." This project utilizes a theory of shifting gender relationships in later life, proposed by Gutmann (1987), and tests its relevance to understanding patterns of marital politics and parental responsibility. (3) "The need for qualitative analyses of family patterns

in later life..." This research draws most heavily upon qualitative analyses of intensive interview data, in which respondents were allowed to present their own versions of their lives, rather than respond to versions and priorities imposed by the investigators. (5) "The need to examine gender differences...in experiences of men and women in the middle years." This research is designed to explore not only sex differences between males and females, but to explore the gender-linked beliefs, experiences, and self-attributions that will help us understand the psychological structure of gender more fully.

Because this research is tied to a particular data set, it is crucial to first understand the nature of the sample and the data available for analyses. While this report will utilize only a small subset of the data, analyses which have already been conducted also inform our understanding of the patterns reported here.

II. RESEARCH STRATEGIES

A. Sample

The middle-aged men and women included in these analyses participated in a larger study of young adult children and their parents. The sampling procedures were designed to include middle-aged and aging adults who are among the most stable Midwesterners, geographically and maritally. Participants were recruited by contacting a random sample of the community public high school graduating classes of 1970-71, 1973, and 1979 in order to obtain young adults who would be approximately 29, 26, or 23 at the time they were interviewed. The parents of the young adults randomly selected were invited to participate if the young adult lived within two hours of the parental home, if both mother and father of the young adult were still alive and married to each other, and if it seemed likely that we could get both parents to cooperate in the study.

The parents lived primarily in "Parkville," a middle-sized midwestern suburb. Parkville began as an independent village with strong settlement from Western European immigrants; until the past two decades, the community was almost entirely white, and the sample are all white. Half of the sample are Catholic; most of the rest are Protestant. Using the Hollingshead and Redlich Two-Factor Index of Social Status (1957), with a five-class system where I is high, the mean of 2.65 indicates somewhat above middle class. Because of the way

the sample were selected, all the respondents were married at the time they were recruited into the study (though three women became widowed during the study and are not included in these analyses).

Characteristics of parents included in the current analyses are shown in Table 1. These include those who completed all phases of the research, including packets of self-report measures and two different personal interviews. One hundred and thirty one wives responded, ranging in age from 43-68 (M 53.8, SD 5.6 yrs). The average level of formal education is some college; 10% have graduate degrees, and 33% are high school graduates. In terms of occupational status, 17% are in upper status executive, professional or managerial position; 21% are in administrative; and 18% are in clerical positions; 40.5% are employed full time. Assessing the occupational status of homemakers is problematic, at best. In this sample, 35.9% of the women identify themselves as homemakers, not employed full or part-time; they are classified according to the Hollingshead & Redlich (standard) convention with unskilled labor. We managed to pursuade 107 of the husbands of these women to participate in the full study, giving us data on 107 couples. As indicated in Table 1, the socio-demographic characteristics of the sub-sample of wives available for couple analyses do not differ from the 131 women in the larger sample; analyses reporting only on experiences of wives will usually utilize the larger sample, while those comparing perceptions of husbands and wives use the set of 107 couples.

The husbands in the sample are, not unexpectedly, somewhat older, ranging in age from 44 to 76 (M 57, SD 6.6); more have graduate degrees (25%) and fewer are high school graduates (20%). The men have higher occupational status; 47% are (or were, if retired) in executive, professional, or managerial positions. Most (84%) are employed full time; only 11% are retired.

The current marriage is the only one for most of sample; 95% of the women and 96% of the men have had only one marriage. The average duration of marriage in this sample is 32 years (SD 5.8), with a range of 21 to 47 years. (The figures given for husbands and wives do not agree exactly; this reflects the fact that data collection occurred over more than a year and the fact that spouses did not always agree exactly.) The majority of the couples (79%, 85 of the 107 couples) married between 1946-1959, often identified as the Post-War Baby Boom parents; 8% (8 couples) married 1960-61. Eleven per cent (12 couples) married during WWII, 1940-45

Table 1

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

	WIVES TOTAL SAMPLE	WIVES COUPLE SAMPLE	HUSBANDS SAMPLE
Number	131	107	107
AGE (M/SD/Range)	53.8/5.6/43-6	53.2/5.6/43-68	57.0/6.6/44-76
EDUCATION			
1. Graduate Work	10.1%	10.5%	25.5%
2. College Graduate	29.5	30.5	27.4
3. Some College	24.8	25.7	22.6
4. High School Graduate	32.6	30.5	19.8
5. Some High School, Less	3.1	2.9	4.7
OCCUPATIONAL STATUS (M, SD)	4.8 (2.1)	4.7 (2.1)	2.8 (1.7)
1. Executive, Professional, Manager	16.8%	16.8%	46.8%
2. Administrative	20.6	22.4	30.8
3. Clerical	18.3	16.8	7.5
4. Skilled	2.3	2.8	10.3
5. Homemaker; Unskilled labor	41.2	40.2	2.8
6. Unemployed, seeking work	.8	.9	1.9
PRESENT WORK STATUS			
Full Time Employed	40.5%	39.3%	84.1%
Part Time Employed	16.8	18.7	.9
Homemaker	35.9	35.5	-0-
Retired	3.8	3.7	11.3
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION			
Catholic	48.5%	49.1%	45.8%
Protestant	42.3	43.4	41.1
Jewish	3.8	1.9	2.8
Other	5.4	5.6	10.3

Table 1 (cont.)

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

	WIVES TOTAL SAMPLE	WIVES COUPLE SAMPLE	HUSBANDS SAMPLE
MARRIAGE (M, SD, Range)			
Duration	32.1/5.7/21-45	31.4/5.8/21-45	32.0/5.4/22-47
Year Married			
1937-1939	1.5% (2)	1.9% (2 couples)	
1940-1945	14.5% (19)	11.2% (12 couples)	
1946-1959	77.3% (101)	79.4% (85 couples)	
1960-1961	6.7% (9)	7.5% (8 couples)	
Age at Current Marriage	22.9/3.7/17-37	22.9/3.7/17-37	26.3/5.7/18-44
One Marriage Only	95.4%	95.3%	96.3%
CHILDREN (M, SD, Range)			
Total Number	4.3/2.1/1-11	4.3/2.0/1-11	
N Living at Home	1.6/1.6/0-7	1.7/1.6/0-7	
Child under 18 at home	23.7%	27.1%	
Child age 18-23 at home	43.5%	44.9%	
Any child under 24 at home	51.9%	54.2%	
Child age 24 or older at home	31.3 %	29.9%	
No children at home	26.4%	27.6%	
FILIAL RELATIONSHIPS			
Living parents or in-laws		59.5%	

and 2% Pre War 1937-39. The average age at current marriage for the women was 23 (SD 3.7, range 17-37) and 26 for the men (SD 5.7, range 18-44).

These couples represent "baby boom" parents. There is only one single-child family in the sample. The average family has 4.3 children; the largest family has 11. Because of the sample selection procedures, all families could be considered in the "launching" or "post launch" phases of family development. In fact, only 28% of the families have no children living at home. Among the couples, 27% have one or more children under 18 living with them (a few of whom are grandchildren); 45% have one or more children aged 18-23 who are regarded as living in the parental home; and 30% have at least one child over 24 living with them. These figures suggest the complexity of describing transitions which may be linked to household composition during these years.

Since one characteristic of middle age, particularly for women, involves parent-care, we also collected information on filial relationships. Sixty percent of the couples have at least one parent or parent-in-law living, giving some index of intergenerational family structure and potential sources of support and obligation.

B. Data Collection Procedures

After the names of graduates were selected from the high school graduating lists, we tried to locate the family in the larger metropolitan area. If the family could be located, a letter was sent to the parents' home. This was followed by a telephone call to obtain information of the family's eligibility and the willingness of family members to participate in the research. Approximately 70% of those who were eligible agreed to participate in some phase of the intensive research; cooperation was greater among mothers than fathers. (Cooperation was substantially better among men who were contacted later in the study, when we had learned to contact them first; when the wife/mother was involved first, many men indicated that there was no point in their being involved, since we had already talked to "her". I got more cooperation from the men by stressing how important it is for them to speak for themselves about family issues...)

A brief interview at the time of the initial telephone contact provided information on the educational and occupational statuses of the middle-aged parents. Mothers and fathers completed a packet of questionnaires

which took approximately one hour to complete; these included standardized measures of personality, psychosomatic symptoms, alcohol and drug use, ego development, and age norm expectations; questionnaires were counter-balanced to control for possible order effects. About half the parents completed the questionnaire battery at one of a number of small parent group meetings held in the community. At those meetings I explained the study and answered questions. Parents also participated in two separate semi-structured personal interviews: the Transitions Interview explored their relationship with the study child, and the Life Structure Interview (LSI) explored their own life.

The LSI was typically administered in two sessions, each lasting two to four hours. The interview covers (in order discussed) personal health, spouse's health, work, marriage, parenting in general, filial relationships, perceived past, religion, leisure, and gender roles. Questions within each domain focused on the kinds of gratifications and strains experienced, strategies for dealing with strains, and perceived changes. At the end of each interview section, respondents were asked to complete two scales about that domain; one assessed Feelings or Satisfaction, and the other assessed Psychological Investment in the domain. Data collected as part of the LSI interviews will constitute the primary source of information for the analyses reported here.

In order to maximize independence of the data, different interviewers were utilized for each person in the family and for each interview; no interviewer talked to both husband and wife in a couple (and no interviewer administered both the Transitions and Life Structure Interviews to the same person). LSI interviewing was done by the Principal Investigator (Huyck), and by more mature, trained clinical psychology students. (I interviewed 70 of the 238 midlife respondents.) Most of the data was collected between 1982 and 1985.

C.1. Measures of Marital Experiences

1) Marital Satisfaction Self Report This scale consists of six positive adjectives (loved, relaxed, stimulated, contented, grateful, confident) and six negative adjectives (bored, tense, frustrated, bothered or upset, neglected, unhappy). The instructions are to: "Think now of all the pleasures and problems that go into daily life with your (husband/wife) and indicate how much you feel each of the following", where 1 indicates the feeling very much applies, 2 somewhat applies, 3 only a little, and 4 not at all. Scores were

recoded so that high scores indicate high satisfaction. Total scores have a potential range of 12 (indicating the most negative) to 48 (indicating the most positive evaluation). The scale was modified from those used by Pearlin & Schooler (1978). Alpha internal reliability is .95 for wives and .92 for husbands.

2) Marital Politics Ratings These ratings were developed for this study. The conceptual basis lies in the model of gender-style transitions described by Gutmann (1987), whereby one adjunct to the process of launching children into adulthood is a reworking of the internal dynamics of ego mastery and, presumably, some shifting in intimate relationships such as marriage. Thus, the initial conceptualization involved describing a process of transition from gender-differentiated relationships in which women conceded dominance to husbands to one in which women pressed for more influence in the relationship. The initial observations of change were developed on the basis of cross-cultural interviews with individuals, mostly men, and from clinical work with men and women experiencing difficulties (Gutmann, Griffin, & Grunes, 1982). The parental imperative hypothesis for accounting for observed changes was developed in the context of considering more traditional, family-centered cultures similar to the ones included in this study. However, the model does not specify how changes might be revealed in the marriage relationship.

Data-grounded classifications were developed separately for men and women by intensive reading of interview protocols. (The initial classification scheme was developed by David Gutmann; revisions were made collaboratively by Gutmann and Huyck.) The process of identifying the classification schemes presented followed the process outlined by McCracken (1988) in his description of qualitative data analysis of interview data. A subset of cases were used to identify themes and styles of responding to marital dilemmas; initial descriptions were modified as additional cases were considered. Using these processes, five patterns of Marital Politics were identified for women, and nine for men. While they reflect common underlying issues, they are not easily comparable; they are, rather, rooted firmly in the gender-specific experiences of the respondents.

Five styles were identified for the **wives**: (1) Pretransitional, Conceding Authority to the Husband; (2) Passive Management of Covert Anger; (3) Ambivalent Overt Assertion; (4) Unambivalent Overt Assertion; and (5) Matriarchical Nurturance. For the **husbands**, nine differented styles were identified: (1) Pretransitional; (2) Under Pressure; (3) Crisis; (4) Separate Peace; (5) Equalitarian; (6) Conceding Dominance to Wife

Generally; (7) Conceding to Domineering Wife; (8) Conceding to Wife Because of His Illness; and (9) Post-Transitional Union. These patterns will be described in the Results section below, since the identification of these patterns is a major contribution of the research.

The final coding was completed by two senior investigators (Gutmann and Huyck). Acceptable interrater reliability was established; disagreements were discussed and consensus reached. This method of rating takes full advantage of the expertise of the coders, but it lacks the "distance" of a trained professional working from an established coding manual or standardized procedure. Thus, the ratings are presented as descriptive and provocative; further research will clarify their utility for other samples or other researchers.

3) Marital History measures used in the present analyses include duration of marriage and age at current marriage.

C.2. Measures of Location in the Social Life Course

4) Chronological Age is used as one index; however because this is an index variable which has relatively poor predictive power for behavior in adult life, the focus is on more precise measures of age.

5) Family Age is indexed by ages of children living in the parental home. This was determined by noting the ages and residence of each child in the family. Because of the exploratory nature of these analyses, and because there is no compelling rationale for making finer distinctions, bimodal measures were constructed showing whether there was one or more, or no, children in a particular age group living at home. Initial age groups used were: 17 and under, 18-23, 24-27, and 27+; because there are relatively few families with children over 27 at home these were combined to reflect those 24+. These finer distinctions allow us to examine the relative impact of having younger, college-age, older, or no children in the family home.

6) Social Status indices used in these analyses include measures of employment involvement, occupational status, and level of formal education. Occupation and Education are ranked according to the Hollingshead and Redlich (1957) system for assessing social status. These indicate relationships with wider social institutions, and the accomplishments reflected in education and occupation are often regarded as excellent predictors of life styles and life chances.

C.3. Measures of Personal Dispositions and Self Attributions

7) Gender-linked Self Attributions: the PRF-Andro One measure of gender used was the standardized scale (Berzins, Welling, & Wetter, 1978; Berzins, Wetter, & Welling, 1981). Two subscales made up of 29 masculinity and 27 feminity items were administered as part of an 85-item Interpersonal Disposition Inventory. Each items consists of a sentence describing a particular behavior. Participants answer true or false to indicate whether each item describes their own behavior. The items were selected from those on the Personality Research Form to reflect the attributes included in the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974). By making the traits more explicitly behavioral, the measure is somewhat less ambiguous than those asking only for adjective descriptions. Total Masculinity and Total Femininity scale scores are computed for the 29 M and 29 F items. Alpha coefficients are .76 for the Masculinity and .67 for the Femininity scale in this sample.

8) Psychosomatic Symptom Distress: the SCL-90 A 90-item Symptom Check List (SCL-90, Derogatis, Rickles, & Rock, 1976) was used as one index of well-being. The check list consists of 10 symptom dimensions made up of 6 to 13 items each. For each item, participants indicate on a 5-point scale (0=not at all, 1=a little bit, 2=moderately, 3=quite a bit, 4=extremely) the extent to which they have been distressed by the symptom during the past seven days. Participants receive an average score for each symptom dimension. A total score (the General Severity Index) is calculated by summing the scores for all items and dividing by 90. Reliability and validity studies are summarized in a detailed manual (Derogatis et al., 1976); the Alpha coefficient for this sample was .97.

III. ANALYSES AND RESULTS

A. Marital Satisfaction

1. Gender: The overall level of satisfaction expressed in the self-report measure is quite high. With a maximum score of 48, wives report an average of 41.0 (SD 7.8) and husbands 42.5 (SD 6.0). These patterns are similar to those reported by others, with wives having somewhat lower satisfaction and somewhat greater variability. While husband and wife scores are significantly correlated ($r=.40$, $p > .00$), the average scores are significantly higher for husbands (paired T-Test $p > .05$).

2. Sociodemographic Characteristics: ANOVA analyses were performed to assess the significance of personal and spouse's **Educational Level** and **Occupational Status** level on marital satisfaction for husbands and wives. None were significant, suggesting that in this sample these indices are not related to self rated satisfaction. **Chronological age** was not related to marital satisfaction for men or women.

3. Family Age: **Duration** of marriage shows a pattern of increased satisfaction for men and women; however, duration was significantly related to satisfaction for husbands but not for wives ($r=.10$ for wives, and .22 for husbands, $p > .01$). In order to assess possible curvilinear patterns, duration was grouped into varying periods. The grouping presented reflects other analyses which suggest that the early-30s seem to be critical periods of transition in this sample. Results are shown in Table 2. Husbands have significantly higher satisfaction only during the middle period, from 30-34 years of marriage (Paired T-Test $p > .04$).

Children living at home was also used as an index of family age. Initial analyses separated parents who had children under 18, college-age (18-23), and older (24-26, and 27+). No differences in marital satisfaction (or other measures) were evident between those with younger and college-age children at home, indicating that for this sample whatever parenting involves extends through the normal college age years. Thus, results are presented here in terms of comparing those who have youngsters at home (under 24), and those who have "older" children at home. Only the mothers seem responsive to this measure; mothers who have young adult children over 24 living at home report lower marital satisfaction than those who have no older children at home. The presence of children younger than 24 does not seem to affect the marital satisfaction levels for either parent.

Table 2

MARITAL SATISFACTION BY FAMILY AGE

(Mean and Standard Deviation)

	(N)	COUPLES WIVES		HUSBANDS	
DURATION OF MARRIAGE					
21-29 Years	(42)	40.3	(8.3)	40.7	(6.8)
30-34 Years	(37)	40.9	(8.3)	43.3	(6.2)
35-47 Years	(28)	42.4	(6.4)	44.2	(3.5)
		F= 1.4 (p >.24)		F= 2.0 (p >.15)	
CHILDREN LIVING AT HOME					
Children Under 24 at Home	(58)	41.9	(7.3)	41.7	(6.3)
No Children Under 24 at Home	(49)	40.1	(8.3)	43.4	(5.6)
		F=.65 (p >.52)		F= 3.5 (p >.03)*	
Children Over 24 at Home	(32)	40.4	(8.0)	43.4	(5.9)
No Children over 24 at Home	(75)	43.3	(5.6)	42.1	(6.1)
		F= 4.6 (p >.03)*		F= 1.0 (p >.32)	

The number of children was not significantly related to marital satisfaction (r=-.02 for fathers, +.10 for mothers).

These analyses suggest that self-rated marital satisfaction is not tied to standard socioeconomic measures (occupation and education), but may reflect family life course factors. The next, major set of analyses explores Marital Politics.

B. Marital Politics

1. Patterns for Wives

1.a. ***Description*** Five patterns of Marital Politics were identified for the 131 wives in the sample. (Initial categories were developed by David Gutmann, and revised in collaboration with Huyck.) These patterns, or styles, were designed to reflect the ways in which the wife dealt with potential or actual conflict in the allocation of time, energy, attention, etc. within the marital dyad. The focus is upon the underlying feelings and justifications as much as upon overt responses, and with management of anger. The styles are predicated on the assumption of a fairly "normal" transition in marital relationships as children are launched into adulthood. This scheme is thus intended to be applicable and relevant only for couples who have invested some substantial energy into parenting. The percentages are based upon the full sample of 131 wives.

Pretransitional, Conceding to Husband: 22.1% (N=29) These wives describe a relationship with division of labor along fairly traditional lines; they defer to the husband without a lot of questioning or evident strain.

Passive Management of Covert Anger: 22.1% (N=29) These wives describe some to a fair amount of anger and/or unhappiness about the marriage relationship, but they do little to confront the situation directly. They may complain to others and do things which are a disguised manifestation of anger.

Ambivalent Overt Assertiveness: 30.5% (N=40) These wives describe instances where she confronts her husband directly with her wishes or with her anger, but she also expresses ambivalence about the wisdom of doing so. She seems torn between her desire to "keep the peace" and to assert herself more forcefully.

Unambivalent Overt Assertiveness: 14.5% (N=19) These wives express wishes and complaints directly to their husbands, even when they are hostile and even when they recognize that the husband will be uncomfortable; they feel justified. For some women, this is expressed in forging a separate peace, or finding an arena where she can be "herself" in an important domain outside of marriage.

Matriarchical Nurturance: 10.7% (N=14) These women see themselves as in charge, but in a benign way. They recognize the husband's vulnerability and try to protect him, rather than challenge, demean, or ridicule him.

1.b. ***Sociodemographic Characteristics and Marital Politics*** Using Chi Square statistics, the Marital Politics of wives was not related to their own educational or occupational status, nor to the educational level of their husbands. However, this measure is significantly related to the husband's occupational

status ($p > .01$). Husbands who have (or had) higher status positions (executives, managers, or professionals) are more likely to have wives who concede to their authority (e.g., are Pretransitional or Ambivalently Assertive); men in administrative (middle-management) level positions are more likely to have wives who are either openly confrontational or feel clearly "in charge" already.

Marital Politics styles are related to chronological age. However, the focus here is on identifying what chronological age may signify, such as differential family experiences.

1.b. Family Age and Marital Politics Responses of wives to the marital relationship, as reflected in the Marital Politics ratings, are related to duration of marriage, presence of younger children (under 24) at home, and number of children at home.

The pattern is clear with the mean duration of marriage for each of the marital politics styles. As indicated in Table 3, these differences are not large, but they are consistent in suggesting some kind of time-linked pattern of change within the marriage.

Table 3

DURATION OF MARRIAGE BY WIFE MARITAL POLITICS

Style	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Total Sample	(131)	32.2	(5.7)
Pretransitional, Conceding to Husband	(29)	30.3	(7.2)
Passive Management of Covert Anger	(29)	31.7	(4.9)
Ambivalent Overt Assertion	(40)	32.2	(5.3)
Unambivalent Overt Assertion	(19)	33.4	(6.1)
Matriarchical Nurturance	(14)	34.6	(3.9)
		$F = 1.3$ ($p > .23$)	

The Marital Politics style revealed by wives is also linked significantly to the ages of children living in the home. Using Chi Square analyses for politics style by presence/absence of any children of that

age range, Marital Politics is related modestly to having children 17 or younger at home ($p > .07$), more clearly to having college-age children (age 18-23) at home ($p > .01$), and not to the presence of children 24 or older ($p > .35$). Comparing women with any children under 24 at home vs those with no younger adults or children at home shows a Chi Square of 10.9 ($p > .00$). Marital Politics style is significantly related to **number of children living at home** (Chi Square 31.4, $p > .00$). These results are consistent with a family developmental model of change.

1.c. Gender-linked Self Attributions and Marital Politics In order to explore the ways in which gender may contribute to the patterns of marital interaction, the PRF-Andro scales for Masculinity and Femininity were compared for the women and their husbands within each Marital Politics style. The mean scores are shown below in Table 4. (The maximum score for the M scale is 29, for F 27.)

Table 4

GENDER SELF-ATTRIBUTIONS AND WIVES' MARITAL POLITICS

	Wife PRF		Husband PRF	
	MASC	FEM	MASC	FEM
Total Sample Means (SD)	11.9 (4.6)	17.1 (3.6)	15.3 (4.5)	14.9 (3.3)
Pretransitional, Defers	11.5 (4.9)	18.6 (3.0)	15.0 (4.4)	14.4 (3.4)
Covert Anger	12.5 (5.0)	16.9 (3.0)	17.0 (4.8)	15.0 (3.2)
Overt Ambivalent Assertion	11.2 (4.3)	16.2 (3.9)	14.5 (4.4)	14.6 (3.6)
Overt Unambivalent Assertion	11.5 (4.2)	16.7 (3.6)	15.3 (5.0)	16.0 (2.9)
Matriarchical Nurturance	13.3 (4.6)	18.4 (3.4)	16.2 (3.8)	15.2 (3.2)

These differences are clearly not substantial (and none of the ANOVA F values are statistically significant). However, several patterns are evident when examining comparisons of each scale with the sample means. The Pretransitional and Matriarch wives are both notable for realtively high scores on the Femininity scale; a chief component of this scale is what I termed "active nurturing" (Huyck, 1991). Women who are feeling some anger and dissatisfaction but are not expressing it (Covert Anger) are more likely to have husbands

who describe themselves as having more stereotypically masculine characteristics; the primary factor in this scale reflects interpersonal dominance.

1.d. Marital Satisfaction and Marital Politics The wife's Marital Politics style is clearly related to the ways wives and husbands rate their satisfaction with the marriage. Table 5 shows a pattern of relatively high marital satisfaction for both partners in relationships where wives describe the husband as being the family leader (Pretransitional) and where they see themselves as in charge (Matriarch). Marital satisfaction is lowest when wives are unambivalently assertive and challenging. It also suggests that wives begin asserting themselves, ambivalently, when they are more dissatisfied with the relationship.

Table 5

MARITAL SATISFACTION BY WIFE MARITAL POLITICS

Marital Politics	(N)	Wives		Husbands	
Pretransitional	(29)	45.9	(2.0)	45.2	(3.4)
Covert Anger	(29)	42.9	(5.8)	42.7	(5.3)
Overt Ambivalent Assertion	(40)	39.7	(7.2)	42.0	(6.5)
Overt Unambivalent Assertion	(19)	32.5	(9.3)	37.3	(7.5)
Matriarchical Nurturance	(14)	45.4	(2.6)	44.8	(4.1)
		F=16.6 (p >.00)		F=5.1 (p >.00)	

1.e. Somatic Distress and Marital Politics In addition to satisfaction with the marriage relationship, Marital Politics styles are related to psychosomatic symptom distress, one index of stress. The General Servity Index of the SCL-90 was used to compare mean symptom levels. The average level of symptom distress is low in this sample (.46 for women, .43 for men), not surprising for a community sample. Levels below the mean are evident for women in Matriarchical (.35), Pretransitional (.40) and Covert Anger (.41) styles; symptom distress is higher (.63) for women who are showing Unambivalent Assertion. Similar patterns are evident for the husbands, with the most symptom distress seen with unambivalently assertive wives (.62). Relatively low distress is seen in husbands of wives who are Pretransitional (.35), Matriarchs (.39), or dealing with anger covertly (.39).

2. Marital Politics Patterns for Husbands

2.a. ***Description*** Nine different patterns were identified for the 107 husbands in the sample. (Initial classifications were made by David Gutmann and revised in collaboration with Huyck.) The underlying construct is the same as for the wives, with a focus upon the underlying feelings and justifications as much as upon overt responses. The patterns describe the ways they dealt with issues of potential conflict and competing demands for resources in the marriage.

1. **Pretransitional: 6.5% (N=7)** These husbands describe the relationship in terms of separated roles and maintain a sense of themselves as the provider and protector in the family system. They have major investments in work outside the home.

2. **Pretransitional But Under Pressure: 11.2% (N=12)** These husbands describe a relationship where he is trying to hold on to a more traditional division of labor but he is feeling pressure to change; he resists efforts to change prior arrangements.

3. **Crisis: 9.3% (N=10)** These husbands report active efforts from the wife to make him change the traditional patterns of relating, and they are not sure what to do. They are feeling upset about the prospects of change.

4. **Egualitarian: 16.8% (N=18)** These husbands report separate roles but balanced power; he is not feeling either internal or external pressure to change.

5. **Separate Peace: 4.7% (N=5)** These husbands indicate that they have resolved power struggles by setting up separate domains, where each can feel ascendant. They do not feel they are struggling a lot over power at the current time. However, the price of peace is more distance than they might have had earlier.

6. **Post-Transitional Conceding Dominance Generally: 19.6% (N=21)** These husbands describe themselves as giving in, often more than he would like, with no specific rationale.

7. **Post-Transitional Conceding Dominance Because of His Ill Health: 4.7% (N=5)** These men indicate that they have turned over important issues of marital life to the wife in order to protect himself from stress, or because of recent or threatening health problems, which she manages.

8. **Post-Transitional Conceding to a Domineering Wife: 12.1% (N=13)** These men describe themselves as giving in, more than they feel comfortable about, because of pressures from a wife who is seen as overbearing, relentless, etc.

9. **Post-Transitional Union: 15.0% (N=16)** These men describe a relationship where "wifey and I are one"; they minimize differentiation in roles, interests, or activities. Conflict is denied, minimized, or externalized.

2.b. Sociodemographic Characteristics and Marital Politics In order to compute Chi Square statistics on the relationship between marital politics styles and other characteristics, the nine styles were grouped into four: Early Transition (combining Pretransitional and Under Pressure), Protesting (Crisis and Generally Conceding); Autonomous (Separate Peace and Egualitarian); and Conceding (Because Ill, To Domineering Wife, and Union). This grouping was performed to see whether the status characteristics influenced the apparent extent of sharing (or conceding) marital power, regardless of rationale. Husband marital politics styles are **not related** to either his own or his wife's educational or occupational level. These results suggest that these measures are not simply reflecting larger social status issues.

Mean ages differ for the nine Marital Politics styles, largely in the direction predicted, with the average of husbands under 56 in the earlier styles (in order, youngest first: Crisis, Pretransitional, Conceding Generally, Under Pressure, Separate Peace); mean age is over 58 for the others (Domineering Wife, Union, Ill, Egualitarian). The Egualitarian style is "out of order" from that predicted, and may be more similar to the Union style but with somewhat greater gender and role differentiation.

2.b. Family Age and Marital Politics Husbands Marital Politics ratings are related significantly to duration of marriage and to the presence of college-age children living at home.

Table 6

DURATION OF MARRIAGE BY HUSBAND MARITAL POLITICS

Style	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Total Sample	(107)	32.0	(5.4)
Pretransitional	(7)	29.3	(2.6)
Pretransitional Under Pressure	(12)	30.9	(4.5)
Crisis	(10)	27.5	(2.6)
Egualitarian	(18)	35.7	(6.5)
Separate Peace	(5)	30.0	(3.8)
Conceding Dominance Generally	(21)	31.1	(4.3)
Conceding: Ill	(5)	35.2	(4.6)
Conceding: Domineering Wife	(13)	30.8	(4.0)
Post-Transitional Union	(16)	34.0	(6.7)

$F = 3.3$ ($p > .00$)

Husbands' Marital Politics styles are also linked somewhat with the presence of **children in the home.** Chi Square analyses were used to compare styles for men with and without young children (under 18), college age children (18-23) and older children (24 and over) at home. The relationship was not significant for having younger children vs none home, or for having older children at home. However, the relationship was significant for having college-age children at home (Chi Square 18.0, $p > .02$), and for the analysis comparing men who had any children under 24 at home vs. those who did not (Chi Square 23.4, $p > .00$). In addition, the **number of children living at home** is significantly related to father's Marital Politics (Chi Square 69.8, $p > .10$ for the nine-style grouping; Chi Square 35.8, $p > .02$ for the four-style grouping).

These findings suggest that fathers are not highly sensitive to the presence of one younger child (probably last, or a grandchild) or an older child living at home; however, the presence of the "launching age" child, or several children seems to "hold" the father in the earlier modes of marital relating. These results, like those of the women, are consistent with a family development model of change.

2.c. ***Gender-linked Self Attributions and Marital Politics*** One clue about some of the "predicates" of different patterns of marital interaction are revealed in the measures of "masculinity" and "femininity". The PRF-Andro scales for M and F were used for these analyses. These measures are included because the underlying construct of role differentiation and negotiating influence within the marriage may be linked to the senses of gender identity for each partner. Table 7 shows the mean scores for Masculine (maximum score is 29) and Feminine (maximum score 27) scales for husbands and their wives in each of the husbands' Marital Politics styles.

Table 7

GENDER SELF-ATTRIBUTIONS AND HUSBANDS' MARITAL POLITICS

	Husband PRF		Wife PRF	
	MASC	FEM	MASC	FEM
Total Sample Mean	15.3 (3.8)	14.9 (3.2)	11.8 (4.6)	17.1 (3.6)
Pretransitional	17.6 (5.0)	13.1 (2.4)	14.7 (6.6)	17.4 (2.8)
Pretransitional Under Pressure	16.7 (4.7)	13.4 (3.1)	11.3 (3.7)	18.2 (4.0)
Crisis	15.7 (4.8)	13.9 (2.8)	10.4 (4.9)	16.2 (2.8)
Egualitarian	15.7 (4.8)	15.3 (3.4)	11.9 (5.4)	17.8 (4.3)
Separate Peace	16.4 (5.9)	13.8 (2.8)	14.0 (3.8)	15.8 (3.6)
Conceding Dominance Generally	14.4 (4.5)	15.6 (3.4)	11.6 (4.1)	17.7 (3.1)
Conceding: Ill	14.5 (2.6)	14.0 (2.0)	10.2 (3.2)	16.4 (3.2)
Conceding: Domineering Wife	12.1 (4.6)	16.5 (3.2)	12.0 (3.3)	15.3 (4.2)
Post-Transitional Union	16.0 (3.9)	15.5 (3.7)	11.3 (5.4)	17.6 (3.4)
	($p > .18$)	($p > .23$)	($p > .71$)	($p > .55$)

These patterns suggest several observations. First, gender self-attributions overall are not related significantly to Marital Politics, at least as measured here. Suggestive patterns are evident when comparing men and women with means for their group, and when comparing husbands and wives within styles. The men who describe themselves as more in charge in the marital relationship (Pretransitional, Under Pressure, and Separate Peace) have somewhat higher masculinity scores and somewhat lower feminity scores than average. Interestingly, the wives of the Pretransitional and Separate Peace men have relatively more masculine scores, though they are also high on femininity. The lowest masculinity scale score is for men who describe themselves as conceding to a domineering wife; the wives of these men describe themselves as very average on masculine characteristics, though they are somewhat lower than this sample average on the feminine qualities. The least masculine (assertive?) women are those whose husbands are conceding because of illness and those whose husbands describe themselves as in crisis.

*1.d. **Marital Satisfaction and Marital Politics*** Not surprisingly, satisfaction with the marital relationship varies with Marital Politics styles. The least satisfied husbands deseribe relationships where they are giving in to a wife they perceive as domineering, or they have distanced from the relationship and established a separate peace. The highest satisfaction is reported by men who have turned over the marital power to their wife but feel justified because of their own ill health, experience nonconflictual union, feel under pressure to change but feel they are resisting successfully, or describe a differentiated but egualitarian relationship. The highest marital satisfaction is expressed by wives of husbands who have Post-Transitional Union, Pre-transitional, or Egalitarian Marital Politics styles; low satisfaction is evident in wives of husbands who feel they are conceding to a domineering wife or who are in marital crisis. These results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

MARITAL SATISFACTION AND HUSBAND'S MARITAL POLITICS

	(N)	Husbands Mean	S. D.	Wives Mean	S.D.
Pretransitional	(7)	43.0	4.9	42.3	6.6
Pretransitional Under Pressure	(12)	45.6	2.9	43.7	5.3
Crisis	(9)	40.3	7.1	35.9	11.1
Egualitarian	(18)	44.4	3.0	43.1	6.4
Separate Peace	(5)	37.6	5.7	39.2	6.4
Conceding Generally	(21)	43.1	1.8	40.2	8.1
Conceding: Ill	(5)	46.4	1.8	40.2	3.4
Conceding: Domineering Wife	(13)	33.4	7.4	35.6	10.8
Post Transitional Union	(16)	45.6	2.1	45.1	3.4
		F= 9.2 (p >.00)		F= 2.5 (p >.02)	

1.d. Symptom Distress and Marital Politics Husband's Marital Politics style is reflected in psychosomatic symptom scores on the SCL-90 for both partners. Mean scores for the general index were compared for men in the different styles, and their wives. Among men the average symptom score was .43; lower than average scores were reported by men in Pretransitional (.15), Pretransitional Pressured (.22) and Separate Peace (.26) styles; higher levels than average were found for those Conceding to Domineering Wife (.72), Conceding Generally (.52), or describing a Union relationship (.52). The average symptom score for women was .46. Wives of husbands in the Pretransitional (.25) or Pretransitional Pressured (.27) had relatively low symptom distress; higher distress was evident for wives of men who felt they were conceding to a domineering wife (.65) or were conceding because of illness (.57).

The analyses presented by Dr. Gutmann will consider at greater length the ways in which marital politics affect the well-being of the husbands in this sample. The particular questions will focus on what factors differentiate men who have substantial difficulty with what appear to be normal transitions in marital life, toward a relationship in which wife and husband share power more equally. Most men seem to accommodate to these shifts, but some show evidence of great distress. He will draw upon a more clinical perspective and use case studies, as well as collective analyses, to examine this issue more fully.

Future analyses will focus on the factors which seem to contribute to distress among the wives.

3. Congruence in Marital Politics

In order to assess the extent to which we may reasonably describe "their" marriage, the congruence between the Marital Politics styles of the wives and their husbands were examined. As Table 9 indicates, while there is an overall moderately significant relationship (Chi Square = 44.4, $p > .07$), there is also variability. (Grouping the Marital Styles does not alter the strength of the relationship.)

These patterns suggest the great complexity in trying to characterize couple relationships or describe typologies of marriage.

Table 9

CONGRUENCE BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE MARITAL POLITICS STYLES

(Showing % of Total Sample of 107 and N of couples)

	Wife Marital Politics				
Husband	**Pretran**	**Covert Anger**	**Ambivalent**	**Unambivalent**	**Matriarch**
Pretransitional	.9% (1)	2.8% (3)	1.9% (2)	.9% (1)	.0 (0)
Pretran Pressured	5.6% (6)	.9% (1)	3.7% (4)	.0% (0)	.9 (1)
Crisis	1.9% (2)	2.8% (3)	1.9% (3)	2.8% (3)	.0 (0)
Egualitarian	4.7% (5)	3.7% (5)	4.7% (5)	2.8% (3)	.9 (1)
Separate Peace	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	3.7% (4)	.0 (0)	.9 (1)
Conceding Generally	1.9% (2)	6.5% (7)	5.6% (6)	2.8% (3)	2.8% (3)
Conceding: Ill	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	3.7% (4)	.9 (1)	.0 (0)
Conceding: Domineering Wife	.9% (1)	2.8% (3)	3.7% (4)	3.7% (4)	.9% (1)
Post-transitional Union	7.5% (8)	1.9% (2)	2.8% (3)	.0 (0)	2.8% (3)

IV. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

A. Research Design

The research reported here includes an assessment of 131 women and 107 of their husbands; caucasian Americans living in Midwest Parkville; most age 45-70; in long-term marriages (average 32 years). All have at least one young adult child (21-30); average family size is 4.4 children. The data collected include self-report questionnaires measuring marital satisfaction, gender-linked self attributions, and symptom distress; and semi-structured personal interview data. The interview data covering marriage was coded for styles of Marital Politics, assessed separately for wives and husbands; this measure was developed for this research by Gutmann and Huyck. Analyses were directed at describing correlates of marital satisfaction and Marital Politics. Four particular research questions were asked; results pertaining to those questions are summarized below.

B. Research Questions Answered

1. What are the patterns of self-rated marital satisfaction for women and men? Correlates?

- Wives show somewhat lower satisfaction than do men, with differences most evident at 30-34 years of marriage.
- Wives are more variable in marital satisfaction scores.
- Satisfaction is not related to education or occupational level, or to age.
- Satisfaction increases with duration of marriage for men, but not for women.
- Satisfaction is not affected by having children under 24 living at home; wives with children over 24 at home report lower marital satisfaction.
- Satisfaction is strongly linked to Marital Politics patterns. Satisfaction is higher for both when either husband or wife is acknowledged as ascendant, as long as wife is seen as benignly nurturant; satisfaction is low when either perceives a struggle for control.

2. What are the patterns of Marital Politics discernable from interview data?

- Five patterns were identified for wives: (1) Pretransitional, deferring to husband [22%]; (2) Passive Management of Covert Anger [22%]; (3) Ambivalent Overt Assertion [30.5%]; (4) Unambivalent Overt Assertion [14.5%]; and (5) Matriarchical Nurturance [11%].
- Nine patterns were identified for husbands: (1) Pretransitional [6.5%]; (2) Pretransitional Under Pressure [11%); (3) Crisis [9%]; (4) Egualitarian [17%]; (5) Separate Peace [5%]; (6) PostTransitional Conceding Dominance Generally [19.6%]; (7) Post-Transitional Conceding Dominance Because of Ill Health [4.7%]; (8) Post-Transitional Conceding to a Domineering Wife [12%]; and (9) Post-Transitional Union [15%].

3. What are the correlates of styles of Marital Politics?

- Social status measures seem minimally related, though upper occupational status men are more likely to have wives who defer to them and who refrain from open assertion. Education and occupational level of women are not related to Marital Politics measures.
- Family age measures are related. The presence, and number, of children under 24 living in the parental home is associated with Marital Politics for both parents; having children over 24 is not. For husbands, duration of marriage is also related, with men moving from the more authoritative styles to more collaborative or conceding styles.
- Gender-linked self attributions are not related systematically to marital politics.
- Somatic distress is related to Marital Politics. Both partners are most distressed when the husband believes he is conceding to a domineering wife and/or where the wife is unambivalently assertive.

3. How much congruence is there in Marital Politic styles for couples?

- There is some congruence, indicating similar underlying dimensions of change. There is also substantial variability in the ways partners respond to each other.

C. Theoretical Implications: Sources of Change and Stability

One of the persistent questions in social science concerns the sources of behavioral changes -- and continuities. Life span psychologists are particularly interested in how behavioral potentials may shift over the long course of adult life, and the extent to which adult behaviors are linked to childhood experiences or even to genetic potentials (Huyck, 1990). It is obvious that one cross-sectional study cannot possibly separate the possible effects which may contribute to observed behaviors. Our information about change is inferential: what individuals told us about "how they were" compared to how they are now, and comparisons between persons in this sample who are at different points along the continua of chronological and social age. However, we can assess the results from these analyses in terms of the various models of change.

One of the questions of particular interest in this study is the matter of how women and men relate to each other in the context of a long-term committed relationship involving commitments to multiple generations. The respondents in this study were selected to minimize the kinds of obvious differences which can characterize middle-aged adults in contemporary American society: they are relatively "advantaged", in terms of social class, ethnicity, and health; they have made major commitments to parenting and family life; they have managed to maintain stable enough family relations to be locatable some years after the randomly-selected child graduated from the community high school and to have at least two (and usually three) family members agree to participate in a searching examination of their family life; and they carried out most of their parenting in the same community in Midwest America. We are dealing with a fairly select population, selected to represent the "normal" family which is often used as an implicit comparison when dealing with "variant" family constellations. We selected this sample to minimize the kinds of variability which would make it impossible to draw inferences about developmental changes. That is, this sample was intended to provide an approximation of a longitudinal study in a cross-sectional study, by selecting families who were very similar to each other but varied somewhat in chronological and family age. We can examine the results from this sample to assess various possible influences on the ways they relate to each other.

One possible set of influences are **cohort effects**. These are conceptualized as broad-scale social movements or realities which have a notable effect on virtually all of the persons born during a particular period

and who share important early socialization effects. In terms of the issues under investigation here, it is clear that relations between husbands and wives (and children), and what is considered "proper" behavior for men and women, varies somewhat between cultures and historical periods. We have had a substantial social movement over the past two (perhaps three) decades to challenge and revise the norms regarding appropriate feminine behavior, and, by extension, masculine behavior. In the course of this questioning, prior assumptions about the necessity and desirability of marriage, motherhood, careers for women, etc., have been challenged.

The respondents in this study certainly display behaviors and values which could be cohort-related; however they do not show up in the results reported here. Most of the respondents state fairly directly that marriage was not considered an option; that parenting was an assumed aspect of adulthood; that divorce was offensive and socially unacceptable; that men and women "naturally" do different things and have different internal structures; and that while men and women will probably never "understand" each other, they are bound together in mutual dependency for social and species survival. These might well be regarded as "cohort specific" beliefs, in full flower during the Post-War II era when these couples established families.

A "cohort effects" model would predict that the younger women in the sample (those in their 40's in the early 1980s, like me) would be more open to the messages of the Women's Movement, and would display less stereotypic behaviors and be more insistant upon egalitarian relationships in the marriage. However, the data imply the reverse: the older women are more likely to be forging egualitarian relationships, or be challenging the marriage rules to the point where things change. This is complex, of course, since those women who challenged and divorced, or assessed the situation and decided the challenge was hopeless are, by definition, not included in our sample.

The socioevolutionary model assumes that some patterns of basic behavior have been gradually "wired" genetically into the human experience; since parenting is the pivotal species survival need, behaviors which contribute to the survival of the next responsible generation are selected for. In such a model, behaviors exhibited by non-parents are largely irrelevant in the long term, since they have little chance of being transmitted either genetically or through socialization to succeeding generations. In this model, human potentials are molded to suit larger needs, in this case the needs of vulnerable and dependent children for varied

kinds of parental (and grandparental) protection and nurturance. This model does not assume large inherent differences in potentials between males and females, but it does assume that social structures evolve which serve to reinforce selectively those attributes which will enhance the survival of the group, e.g., the young. Thus, as most explicitly stated in Gutmann's Parental Imperative hypothesis, when women and men become parental (emotionally, not just biologically), they transform themselves into those agents which can best serve the needs of the child, and repress aspects of the self which might interfere with adequate parenting. A good, coherent culture supports such repressions in behalf of the welfare of children. However, this model assumes that as adults emerge from parenting (species) responsibilities, they are freed up to "reclaim" the potentials repressed in the service of parenting. (Hence the title of Gutmann's book, Reclaimed Powers) This model would predict that changes would be orchestrated along the axes of family age, particularly in terms of responsiblities to children.

There is strong evidence to support this model in the data reviewed in this report. While chronological age and duration of marriage both relate significantly to the kinds of marital arrangements between wives and husbands, these are still "index variables." What they seem to index is responsibility for children; for this sample, at this time in this culture, parental responsibilities seem to extend into the college-age years. Certainly graduation from high school is not a good indicator of "launching" for these families, or for families who hope to have their children follow them into the middle class. The interviews give further credence to this model, since parents (both fathers and mothers) often spoke about the ways in which they were deferring their own indulgence or renegotiations until a child, or children, had left home, or gotten more securely established.

A third major model for explaining behaviors and behavioral change involves **individual experience.** In this model, behaviors reflect fairly idiosyncratic patterns of experience and reinforcements. Behaviors may change over the course of life, but in no predictable direction, since they are dependent upon often chance-encounters. One hint supporting that model in these data is the evidence regarding congruence of marital styles: while there is some discernable and statistically significant "order" or pattern in the ways that wives and husbands perceive themselves in the marital relationship, there is also substantial variability. Some wives who perceive themselves as deferential to their spouse have husbands who think they are conceding to an overbearing

and demanding wife: wherein lies reality? Probably in both: each operate within a view of reality constructed from a diversity of prior experiences and well-honed sensibilities.

One of the respondents conveyed the complexity of these issues very well, without reading any of the scholarly "background" articles about midlife changes. I asked Mrs. O. how she responded when her husband was irritable or short-tempered with her. "I give it right back!" was her reply. Was this always true, I asked? No. What accounted for the change, I asked. "Well," she replied thoughtfully, "I went back to work, and I found that I was really quite competent. And I had been reading for all those years women saying that women had just as much right to be taken seriously, and I figured that maybe they were right. ...And, actually, it changed after the kids left home. You know, when they are there you want to keep the peace. But when they are gone..." Mrs. O had it all: the influence of contemporary social events (the Women's Movement), personal actions (returning to employment), and family development (children leaving home). She represents one kind of "cohort effect", where social changes -- directing women toward greater assertiveness and involvement outside the home -- coincided with personal and family development influences to effect a response very different from that characterizing her early adult life. In her case, the Women's Movement validated what is probably a fairly natural family-developmental move, providing a rationale and public support for an internally-generated and generationally-appropriate shift.

D. Clinical Implications

This research guides us to consider the complexities of family life during the middle years. It is clear that even among legally and socially intact families there are sources of substantial strain and distress. Some of the stress seems transitional, insofar as we can project from the marital strains of the early-thirties to the relative harmony reflected in the couples who have been married over 35 years. Thus, while there are strains in long-terms marriages, they may reflect normal transitions which can evolve into another form of gratifying relationship.

The major challenges to this evolution appear to be responses of husbands. The complexities of renegotiating relationships during this period are not really clear, but it appears that men are substantially bothered by challenges to their position as family authority. These findings clarify those found in analyses of relationships between gender-linked self-attributions and mental health among this sample (Huyck, 1991). Older higher status men were found to be the most "gender sensitive", with indices of emotional well-being tied to measures of self esteem, sense of mastery, and symptom distress. Older higher status women (like many of those who have been leaders in the Women's Movement) were among the "gender transcendent", for whom mental health measures seem to be independent of the ways they define themselves as feminine. These relationships between the core sense of self as appropriately or acceptably gender-congruent and behaviors evoked in the marital relationship need to be better understood.

E. Research Implications

The most obvious warning about this study, and the inferences, is that no cross-sectional study can capture the processes of interest. Even though the study was designed carefully to make developmental interpretations plausible, there may still be effects which confound the patterns observed.

In terms of measurement, I would warn investigators to be particularly wary of self-report checklists for complex arenas such as marital relationships. When I first surveyed the responses to the Marital Satisfaction scale in this study I thought there was not a lot to talk about in terms of variability. On the other hand, I had done a good deal of interviewing, and I knew there was a lot of strain, ambivalence, and joy that was not reflected. When we began coding the marriage interview section systematically, we came to recognize the shift from the first page of interview questions -- where "public relations" prevailed and the respondent revealed their most optimistic view of the relationship and their dreams -- and the subsequent questions, when the more complex truth began to emerge. They are probably both useful, but not comparable.

Much family research is limited by not eliciting cooperation from men, even though men are often defined as the "problem" in the family constellation. I found that men are often reluctant, at first, to cooperate in what they regard as a "woman's venture." It is crucial that they understand that their perspective is

as valid and as important as that of their wife, or their child. Their experiences in family relationships are, in fact, absolutely crucial: no family systems function well for long without adequate fatherly involvement.

It remains a major challenge to discern ways which might make harmonious, mutually gratifying, and species-adaptive relationships possible between genders and generations. Our research can make some small contribution to this mission.

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